

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for treating tissue having a surface in an arthroscopic environment of a mammalian body having a body temperature with a probe having a proximal end and an electrode at a distal end, comprising ~~the steps of~~ providing a warmed irrigating solution having a temperature approximating the body temperature, delivering the warmed irrigating solution into the arthroscopic environment to substantially fill the arthroscopic environment with the warmed irrigating solution, introducing the distal extremity of the probe into the arthroscopic environment, positioning the electrode adjacent the surface of the ~~tissue and tissue~~, supplying thermal energy to the electrode so as to treat the tissue whereby the warmed irrigating solution inhibits undesirable heating below the surface of the tissue, and aspirating the irrigating solution through a lumen in the probe, wherein the lumen has a distal opening located within a cavity defined by the probe and the electrode is disposed in the cavity.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the warmed irrigating solution is selected from the group consisting of normal saline, ringers lactated solution, Glycine and bacteriostatic water.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 2 wherein the warmed irrigating solution has a temperature of approximately 37°C.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the providing ~~step~~ includes ~~the step of~~ providing an irrigation solution warmed by a tissue bath.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1 further comprising ~~the step of~~ monitoring the ambient temperature within the arthroscopic environment.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 5 wherein the monitoring ~~step~~ includes ~~the step of~~ monitoring the ambient temperature within the arthroscopic environment

with a sensor carried by the distal extremity of the probe.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 5 wherein the supplying step includes the step of modulating the amount of thermal energy supplied to the electrode in response to the ambient temperature within the arthroscopic environment.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein the supplying step includes the step of supplying radio frequency energy to the electrode.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 8 wherein the supplying step includes the step of supplying radio frequency energy between the electrode and a return electrode, the electrode and the return electrode being coupled to a radio frequency generator.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 9 wherein the return electrode is carried by the distal extremity of the probe.

11. (Currently Amended) The method for Claim 1 wherein the surface is a fibrillated cartilage surface, the supplying step includes the step of supplying sufficient thermal energy to the electrode to reduce the level of fibrillation at the fibrillated cartilage surface.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for treating tissue having a surface in an arthroscopic environment of a mammalian body having a body temperature with a probe having a proximal end and a radio frequency electrode, comprising the steps of providing a warmed irrigating solution having a temperature approximating the body temperature, delivering the warmed irrigating solution into the arthroscopic environment to substantially fill the arthroscopic environment with the warmed irrigating solution, introducing the distal extremity of the probe into the arthroscopic environment, positioning the electrode adjacent the surface of the tissue, supplying radio frequency energy to the electrode so as to treat the surface of the tissue whereby the warmed irrigating solution inhibits undesirable heating below the surface of the tissue and tissue, monitoring the temperature of the arthroscopic environment so as to modulate the supply

of radio frequency energy to the electrode in response to such monitored temperature, and aspirating the irrigating solution through an annular lumen in the probe.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 12 wherein the supplying ~~step~~ includes the ~~step of~~ coupling the electrode to a radio frequency generator.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 13 wherein the supplying ~~step~~ includes the ~~step of~~ coupling a return electrode to the radio frequency generator so that the radio frequency energy passes between the electrode and the return electrode.

b1 b7c 15. (Original) The method of Claim 14 wherein the return electrode is carried by the distal extremity of the probe.

16. (New) The method of Claim 1 further comprising monitoring ~~impedance~~ between a power supply and a power return.

17. (New) The method of Claim 16 wherein supplying includes modulating the amount of thermal energy supplied to the electrode in response to the monitored ~~impedance~~.

18. (New) The method of Claim 1 wherein delivering the solution comprises pressurizing the arthroscopic environment.

19. (New) The method of Claim 1 wherein positioning the electrode adjacent the ~~surface~~ of the tissue comprises spacing the electrode from the surface of the tissue. Rej. obj.

20. (New) The method of Claim 1 wherein positioning the electrode adjacent the ~~surface~~ of the tissue comprises positioning the electrode in contact with the surface of the tissue. obj.

21. (New) The method of Claim 1 wherein delivering the irrigating solution comprises using an irrigating system separate from the probe.

22. (New) The method of Claim 1 wherein supplying thermal energy comprises providing thermal energy to a portion of the solution so as to elevate a temperature of the portion of the solution above the temperature approximating the body temperature.

23. (New) The method of Claim 1 wherein positioning the electrode adjacent the surface of the tissue comprises contacting the electrode to the tissue.

24.

(New) The method of Claim 1 wherein the lumen is annular.

25.

(New) The method of Claim 12 wherein the lumen has a distal opening located within a cavity defined by the probe and the electrode is disposed in the cavity.

26.

(New) A method for treating tissue having a surface in an arthroscopic environment of a mammalian body having a body temperature with a probe having a proximal end and an electrode at a distal end, comprising providing a warmed irrigating solution having a temperature approximating the body temperature, delivering the warmed irrigating solution into the arthroscopic environment to substantially fill the arthroscopic environment with the warmed irrigating solution, introducing the distal extremity of the probe into the arthroscopic environment, positioning the electrode adjacent the surface of the tissue, supplying thermal energy to the electrode so as to treat the tissue whereby the warmed irrigating solution inhibits undesirable heating below the surface of the tissue, and aspirating the irrigating solution through an annular lumen in the probe.